MIDDLE EAST

IRAQ

JORDAN

LEBANON

IRAQ

Ancient Babylon Reborn

Ancient Babylonia—situated between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in modern-day southern Iraq—is considered a birthplace of human civilization. Its capital, Babylon, was a city of such scale and sophistication that Greek philosopher Aristotle considered it more comparable to a nation than to a city. The former imperial capital of Kings Hammurabi and Nebuchadnezzar in southern Mesopotamia from the 18th to the sixth century B.C.E., Babylon was once one of the largest and most influential cities in the world.

At nearly 900 hectares, Babylon flourished as a center for culture and engineering and was renowned for its temples, libraries and royal collections. Its citizens are credited with making tremendous advances in astronomy, mathematics, art and architecture. The celebrated "Hanging Gardens of Babylon"—one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World—are said to have been built within its boundaries. Babylon held the distinction of being the largest city of its time, until the advent of the Roman Empire.

Today, however, only shadows of this once great city remain. Its fragile architectural ruins rest just 90 kilometers south of Baghdad. Since its founding many millennia ago, the city of Babylon has been ravaged by war, time and vandalism. Celebrated archaeological treasures such as the Ishtar Gate, Nabu-sha-Khare Temple and the inner-city walls are in urgent need of major restoration to reverse decades of deterioration. Yet the site has been repeatedly denied designation as a World Heritage site, in part because it lacks clearly defined boundaries, a comprehensive preservation plan and safeguards to ensure sustainable tourism.

In 2010, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad gave $2 million through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to World Monuments Fund for archaeological site preservation,

Opposite: Aerial view of the Southern Palace of ancient Babylon. Left: Iraqi cultural heritage professionals learn how to assess the condition of Nabu-sha-Khare Temple during a workshop supported by a grant from the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation.

environmental monitoring, and training of Iraqis in the conservation of earthen architecture. The World Monuments Fund is carrying out the four-year project in coordination with the U.S. Embassy and in partnership with the Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage. The funding supports further documentation and stabilization of some of Babylon's major structures. It also allows conservators to address water drainage problems at the Ishtar Gate and several temples; develop environmental monitoring systems; and train State Board employees, thereby strengthening Iraq's capacity to preserve its cultural sites and monuments for future generations and to reap the economic benefits of tourism.

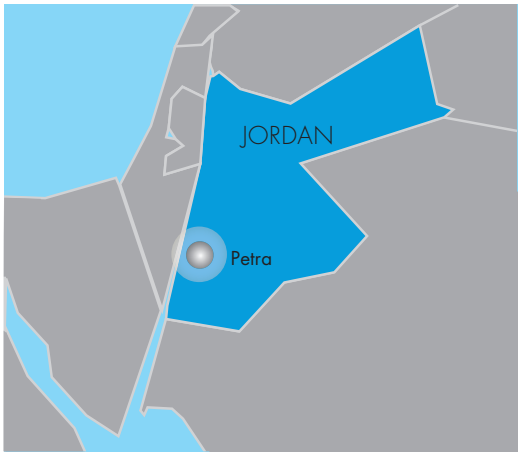
Top left: Iraqi workers clean out the central courtyard of the Nabu-sha-Khare Temple during preservation work supported by the 2010 grant. Bottom left: Iraqi workers shore up a fragile section of the inner-city wall as part of the World Monuments Fund preservation project. Bottom right: View of the original Ishtar Gate with the rebuilt Processional Way in the background. Opposite, from top: This famous sixth-century-B.C.E. statue showing a lion standing over a human greets visitors to Babylon; The archaeological remains of the Northern Palace of ancient Babylon have never been restored.

"In partnership with the government of Iraq and with the World Monuments Fund, the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation provided site maintenance, environmental monitoring, and training in conservation techniques at the ancient site of Babylon, preserving Iraq's rich cultural heritage for generations to come."

– U.S. Ambassador to Iraq
Robert Stephen Beecroft

JORDAN

Temple of the Winged Lions Takes Flight



High above the fortress city of Petra, in modern-day Jordan, two imposing, rose-red, stone winged lions survey what was once the capital of the ancient Nabataean kingdom. The lions may have belonged to the first-century Temple of the Winged Lions, one of the most iconic structures in a stone city so stunning that it was named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1985 and one of the New Seven Wonders of the World in 2007.

Half built, half carved from massive rock faces, Petra is surrounded by mountains and guarded by a narrow gorge, which afforded it unique protection from invaders in centuries past. Although the site has been inhabited by numerous peoples since prehistoric times, it was the Nabataeans who carved the rose-red sandstone into a city.

A nomadic tribe from North Arabia, the Nabataeans settled in present-day Jordan, Israel and Saudi Arabia around 600 B.C.E. The Nabataeans carved their capital of Petra between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea, where they prospered through trade and from the diverse cultural traditions of their trading partners. Situated at the crossroads of ancient Arabia, Egypt and Syria-Phoenicia, Petra was a major commercial center for these ancient civilizations, hosting traders bearing silks from China, spices from India and incense from Arabia.

As Nabataean merchants enriched their coffers through trade, they also enriched their culture. Nabataeans borrowed religious customs from their Mediterranean partners, worshipped Greco-Roman deities and paid homage to pre-Islamic Arab gods and goddesses. The ancient structures in Petra stand as testament to this religious and cultural fusion. Combining exquisitely carved Hellenistic facades with the stark architectural style of traditional Nabataean temples and tombs, Petra is one of the world's most celebrated architectural sites.

Opposite: The Temple of the Winged Lions during an installation of temporary columns and capitals meant to emulate the original structure. Left: The Temple of the Winged Lions in Petra dates from the first century C.E.

Beyond the towering temples and tombs, one of the city's most remarkable features is its innovative water management system that collected and redirected seasonal rains via a vast network of cisterns, reservoirs, diversion dams and channels—and enabled this otherwise arid region to flourish into a desert oasis.

Marked today by rows of stunted columns, Petra's Temple of the Winged Lions was once a religious complex that contained crypts, annexes and living quarters as well as marble, metal and painting workshops. Constructed in 27 C.E., the temple provides a glimpse into how ancient Nabataeans lived. While the precise identity of the temple's deity is unknown, artifacts suggest it could be the Egyptian goddess Isis, patroness of fertility, or the pre-Islamic Arab goddess Al-Uzzá, whom Nabataeans associated with the Greek goddess Aphrodite.

Petra's location at the end of a narrow gorge does not protect it from all threats. Wind, rain and flash floods erode the sandstone, and natural decay undermines the rock city's structural integrity. Evidence suggests that an earthquake in 363 C.E. devastated the Temple of the Winged Lions.

Today, the temple is also threatened by increased tourism. In 2011, the U.S. Embassy in Amman, through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation, awarded the American Center of Oriental Research and the Jordanian Department of Antiquities a $600,000 grant to stabilize, repair and increase accessibility to the Temple of the Winged Lions. The grant is also being used to train Jordanian conservation specialists and educate local Jordanians about the site.

U.S. Ambassador to Jordan Stuart E. Jones expressed hope that the project will also elevate the site's reputation in the eyes of Jordanians as well as international tourists. "Through this project, future generations of Jordanians and visitors from all over the world will continue to enjoy, marvel at and learn from the ingenuity of the Nabataeans—the same creative and resourceful spirit that infuses modern Jordan."

Project managers have made a particular effort to involve local women in the site's restoration by employing them to help sew and fill sandbags that are crucial to the operation. A complementary AFCP grant of $83,700

Top: Local women sew and fill sandbags that are crucial to the temple's stabilization and protection. Bottom: The project team installing temporary columns during the conservation of the Temple of the Winged Lions. Opposite: Sandbags sewn and filled by local women form a protective barrier in front of the Temple of the Winged Lions.

supported Petra National Trust's restoration of an ancient Nabataean dam to protect visitors from flash floods and reduce water erosion.

The United States hopes that its support will help boost economic growth in Jordan, where tourism is the fastest-growing sector. By stabilizing and conserving the site and enhancing the visitor experience, the preservation of the Temple of the Winged Lions should increase this ancient wonder's popularity as a tourist destination.

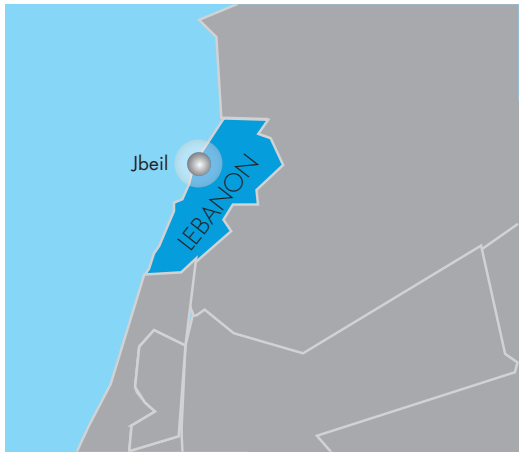
Left: Temporary columns were installed on site to help the conservation team test its proposed plan and visualize the final goal. Bottom: The project team installs replicas of the Winged Lion capitals atop temporary columns. Opposite, from left: Petra's signature rose-red sandstone; The Treasury as seen from the Siq, or main entrance.

"Petra is one of the most memorable and magnificent places on Earth. Hiking through the rose-colored Siq and coming up on the ancient 'Treasury' for the first time is a truly unforgettable experience. The vast park beyond the Siq is also inspiring and its preservation is a global responsibility. It has been an honor and delight to work with Jordanian officials, experts and civil society to help preserve this World Heritage site."

– U.S. Ambassador to Jordan
Stuart E. Jones

LEBANON

Rediscovering a Byzantine Jewel



The ancient Phoenician city of Byblos in modern-day Lebanon once glittered with richly decorated Christian sanctuaries. As Christianity spread across the region during the first century, some of the newly converted expressed their faith by painting exquisite frescoes on church walls.

Of the remaining works, none are so celebrated as those in the Church of Saint Theodore in the village of Behdaidat in Jbeil, Lebanon. Locally known as the Church of Mar Tadros, Saint Theodore is regarded as one of the best remaining examples of ancient Near Eastern architecture. While the church itself was built in the 11th or 12th century, its murals are believed to date back to the 13th century and are considered some of the finest examples of the Syriac Orthodox style of painting.

Famed French traveler Ernest Renan, who visited Saint Theodore church in the early 19th century, declared the church "worthy of attention" and said its paintings "can pass as the most precious specimen of Syrian art."

Far from being an unused relic from ancient times, Saint Theodore is currently the local Orthodox Christian community's primary place of worship. The church is used regularly for Sunday Mass and other events.

During its more than 900-year history, however, the church and its frescoes have suffered their fair share of abuse. Numerous times the artwork has been defaced by vandals. Even the well-meaning have unintentionally damaged the art with several poorly executed attempts at restoration that left the paintings worse for wear. Humidity compounds human-driven injury by further damaging these fragile works of art.

Recognizing the church's deep cultural significance, the U.S. Embassy in Beirut contributed $44,000 through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation in 2009 to support the

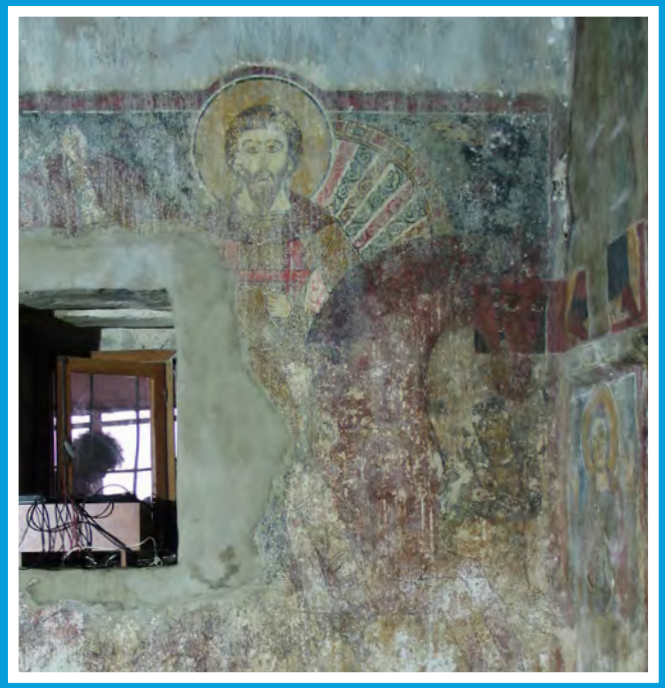
Opposite: Partially conserved frescoes inside the apse of the Church of Saint Theodore built in the 11th or 12th century.
Left: Exterior of the Church of Saint Theodore in the village of Behdaidat in Jbeil, Lebanon.

documentation, cleaning and restoration of Saint Theodore's frescoes. The project was completed in July 2010.

On July 28, 2010, then-U.S. Ambassador Michele J. Sison and Lebanon's then-Minister of Culture, Salim Wardy, toured the church to commemorate completion of the frescoes' restoration. Archaeological conservator Isabelle Skaf, a Beirut-based expert on conservation of antiquities, was also present and called the project "the rediscovery of a hidden jewel of Lebanon's cultural heritage."

The United States is pleased to have helped preserve the precious paintings for future generations. It is also hoped that the restoration will spur economic growth in the area through increased tourism. The Church of Mar Tadros will surely become the crown jewel of tourist destinations in a region blessed with numerous 11th- and 12th-century churches.

Top left: The coastline of Jbeil, Lebanon. Bottom left: A member of the conservation team working to restore the church's ancient frescoes. Below: Portions of the fragile frescoes were marked off in "test windows," such as this one, during their restoration. Opposite: Painting of Saint Theodore on horseback, known locally as Mar Tadros, before (left) and after restoration.



"The Church of Saint Theodore, located in Behdaidat in the Jbeil district of Lebanon, is home to some of the most beautiful Syriac Orthodox frescoes in the world. Conserving these centuries-old frescoes is essential to preserving an important part of Lebanon's history, and we are pleased to contribute to that effort."

– U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon
Maura Connelly

SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

NEPAL

TURKMENISTAN

AFGHANISTAN

Hope for Herat Citadel

The city of Herat, situated in modern-day Afghanistan along the ancient Silk Road trade route, has been a center of culture and commerce since 500 B.C.E. Arts and sciences thrived in this city renowned for its rich traditions in music, philosophy, calligraphy, painting, astronomy and mathematics.

Alexander the Great is believed to have captured the city from the ancient Persian Achaemenids around 330 B.C.E. and contributed to the development of the surrounding area. Included in Alexander's additions was the construction of a citadel that has since become central to the history of Herat. The citadel was successively damaged and repaired from the 11th century through the 13th century as the Turkmen, Mongols and Turkic leader Timur waged campaigns in the city. It was not until the 14th century that this cycle was broken and extensive reconstruction took place as Herat was experiencing a renaissance as a center for Islamic culture and learning.

The citadel, Qala e Ikhtyaruddin, is today one of the oldest extant structures in Herat's historic center. More than 250 meters long and 70 meters wide in parts, the citadel consists of two main enclosures that contain a number of buildings, an extensive courtyard, and 18 brick masonry towers set into walls that are 16 meters high in places.

Over the course of its long history, the citadel has been used as a royal residence, treasury, prison and arsenal. Centuries of conflict and neglect caused the structure to crumble, but the citadel remained a popular tourist destination until the 1970s for those seeking to explore Afghanistan's rich history.

Following nearly three decades of war, the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture took over the site in 2005 and, along with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), began work to restore and preserve the citadel.

Opposite: Interior of the restored Herat Citadel, the foundations of which date from the 4th century B.C.E. Left: Workers restore brick masonry vaults in the northwestern quarter of the citadel complex.

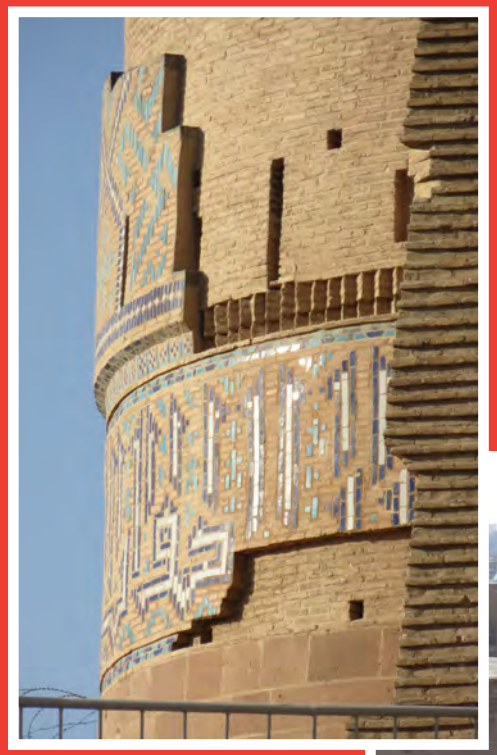
To support this ambitious and complex endeavor, the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation contributed $1.2 million over a four-year period concluding in 2011, when Qala e Ikhtyaruddin was reopened to the public. During the four-year restoration, hundreds of Afghan craftsmen worked with AKTC to make bricks using traditional clay firing and masonry techniques, uncover and preserve original base layers of the structure's three main areas, repair the storm-drain system, recreate walls and doors to match the original structure and design an amphitheater for cultural activities.

The citadel's restoration was undertaken in partnership with the German government, which also contributed $1.2 million and funded the development of a new museum showcasing Afghan artifacts from the site.

When the newly completed citadel and museum opened in 2011, some 200 guests joined members of the Afghan government, then-U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker and other officials from the U.S. Embassy, and representatives of the international community in celebrating the restoration of this priceless icon of Afghan heritage. "Just as the Herat Citadel is a symbol of Afghanistan's endurance, so too is it a symbol of the enduring commitment the United States is making to Afghanistan," said Crocker. "We look forward to the day when Afghans and visitors from around the world can come here to learn about Afghanistan's rich history while enjoying the beauty of this land."

The restoration of Qala e Ikhtyaruddin represents part of a greater U.S. effort to preserve Afghanistan's cultural heritage. Since 2010, the United States has contributed more than $9 million to restore sites around the country, including the Shish Nal Mosque at the Darb e Malik, the 19th-century Goldasta Mosque and the 17th-century Mullah Mahmud Mosque in Kabul, the Khoja Rokhband Mosque and cistern in Herat, and the historic Bagh-e Babur Gardens and pavilions on Sher-e-Darwaza Mountain south of Kabul.

Left: The middle passageway between the citadel's upper and lower enclosures. Opposite, from left: Timurid tile work on the exterior of Herat Citadel after restoration; View of the citadel's north wall, ramparts, and Timurid tower.



"The Herat Citadel, Qala e Ikhtyaruddin, is one of Afghanistan's most important architectural and cultural monuments. The United States is proud to contribute to the restoration of this great landmark, a centuries-old emblem of Afghan history."

– U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan
James Cunningham


NEPAL

Reviving Patan Royal Palace

Past and present blur in Nepal, where ancient traditions remain an integral part of everyday life. For centuries, remote Nepal lay along one of the few trading routes between China and India, but the country remained largely isolated from the outside world until the first commercial airplanes touched ground in the early 1950s. Nepal today reflects a mingling of past and present: a harmonious marriage of Hinduism and Buddhism, of the sacred and the worldly, where modern-day global technology and age-old techniques coexist, and ancient traditions flourish within a modern, urban context.

Nowhere is this infusion of heritage as vibrant as in the Royal Palace complex in Patan. Built by the Malla dynasty in the 17th century, the Patan Royal Palace is one of only three remaining palace complexes in Kathmandu Valley and is considered one of the finest examples of royal buildings and temples in South Asia. The palace square has been recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1979.

The Patan Royal Palace was constructed as the Newars—an ancient people—were experiencing a cultural and political golden age. Much of Nepal's ornate art and architecture can be traced to the Newars, who are celebrated for the craftsmanship, artistry and variety of their intricate wood, brick and metal carvings. Architectural author Lucinda Lambton offers this vivid description of Newar carvings: "Layer upon writhing layer of gods dance, godlets ride elephants, horses leap forth, birds perch, yaks' tails swish, snakes twist, swords are brandished, lions sit staring, tigers are hunted, and a great many strangely stylized crocodiles lurk. A thousand skulls are carved into the pillars framing one doorway; 10,000 leaves and flowers are carved into another. Nothing is ever repeated."

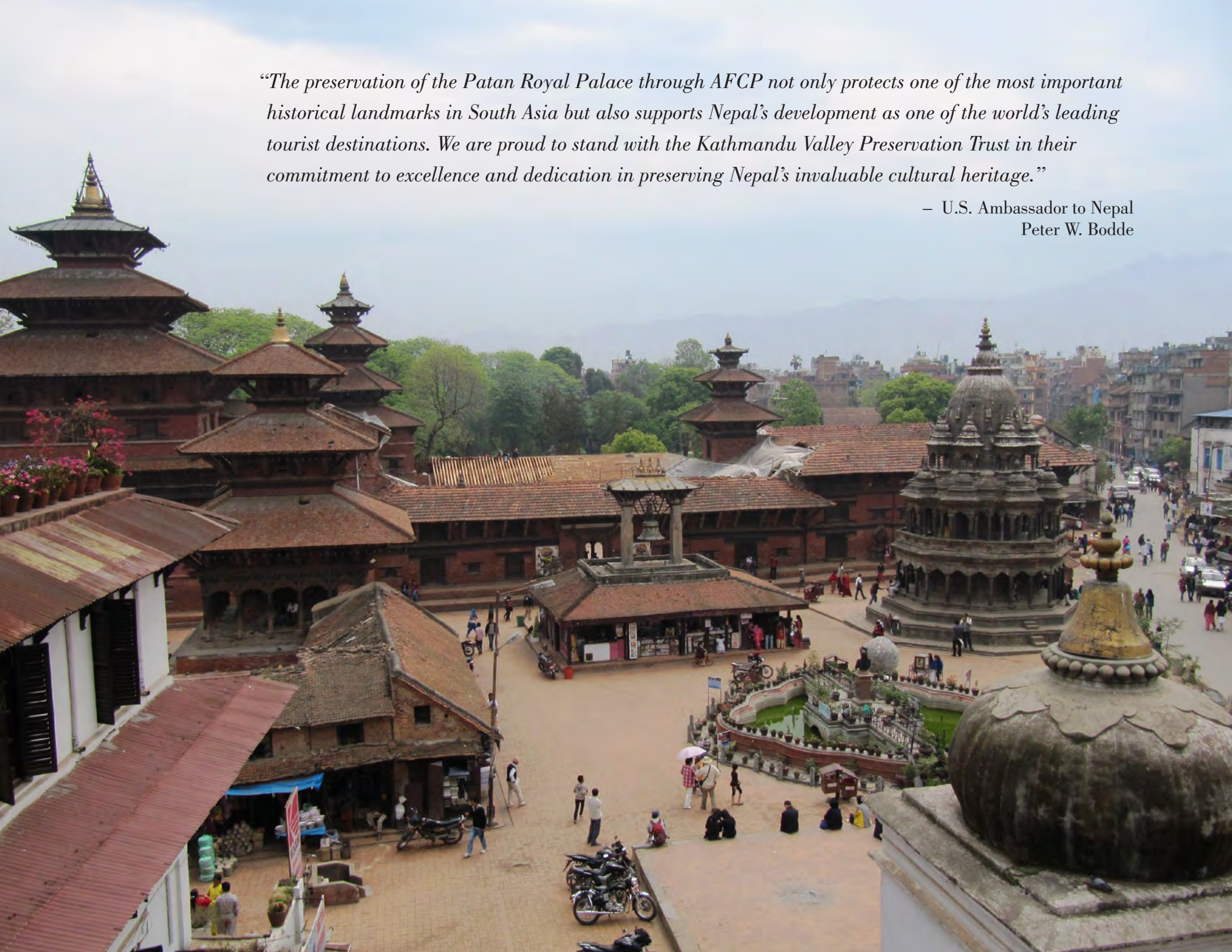
Opposite: Rooftops of the Patan Royal Palace complex during restoration. Left: The Patan Royal Palace complex dates from the 17th century.

Unfortunately, centuries of neglect, structural degradation and well-intentioned but poorly executed attempts at restoration have taken their toll on the Patan Royal Palace complex. In addition, two major earthquakes, in 1833 and 1934, caused severe damage to the complex. In 2009, the U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu awarded a $900,000 grant through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to help restore the site, and in 2012 awarded an additional $200,000 to continue the work. The AFCP initiative to restore the Patan Royal Palace complex represents only the latest of several efforts by the U.S. government to help preserve Nepal's unique cultural heritage. Previous projects include the cleaning and restoration of three Buddhist monuments called *chhortens*, or *stupas*; restoration of the Machali Pati, a traditional rest house for pilgrims associated with the Hindu faith; and restoration of Nag Bahal Hiti, an ancient water supply system in the Kathmandu Valley.

Nepal's acclaimed Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust managed the large-scale palace restoration project. Founded in the early 1990s by Harvard emeritus professor of architecture Eduard Sekler and American architect Erich Theophile, the Preservation Trust has restored dozens of significant monuments and historic sites in Nepal, including more than 16 buildings in the Patan area.

The AFCP-funded project focused on several structures within the palace complex, including the Mul Cok, a 17th-century courtyard with much of its original carved wooden ornamentation intact; the Stone Gates, intricately carved portals that were partially reassembled after the 1934 earthquake; the Kot Pati, an early 19th-century rest house for pilgrims; and the Bahadur Shah Palace, a three-story, European-style brick building that became a museum and home to Harvard University's Nepal Architecture Archive. And for the first time in more than 40 years, water flowed through the spout at Tusa Hiti, the restored 17th-century step well.

Left to right: Carved wooden pillars in Patan Royal Palace; Stone carvers, brick makers and wood carvers worked side by side during the Patan Royal Palace restoration project; Once reserved for the king, the royal step well, or Tusa Hiti, at Patan Royal Palace has been restored for all to enjoy. Opposite: The Patan Royal Palace courtyard.



"The preservation of the Patan Royal Palace through AFCP not only protects one of the most important historical landmarks in South Asia but also supports Nepal's development as one of the world's leading tourist destinations. We are proud to stand with the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust in their commitment to excellence and dedication in preserving Nepal's invaluable cultural heritage."

– U.S. Ambassador to Nepal
Peter W. Bodde

TURKMENISTAN

Securing Sacred Silk Road Site

For the past 400 years, pilgrims from Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Pakistan have sojourned to Ismamut Ata, a monastic complex in the Görogly District in northern Turkmenistan. Today, a couple of mosques, a mausoleum, a *madrasa* (school) and a smattering of administrative buildings are reminders of this once-thriving, sacred medieval site.

Ismamut Ata rests at the southern edge of the Khorezm oasis where the ancient settlement of Ishrat-Kala was founded sometime during the 11th and 12th centuries. Meaning "pleasure," the name *Ishrat* is thought to have derived from the feelings of weary Silk Road travelers upon seeing the first oasis settlement after long days riding through the Kara Kum Desert. A 2006 travel guidebook describes Ismamut Ata as "one of the most atmospheric places of shrine pilgrimage in Turkmenistan [that] deserves to be much better known."

Shrine pilgrimages constitute an important element of the practice of Islam in Turkmenistan. The Ismamut Ata complex, which dates to the 16th or 17th century, provides shelter and respite for travelers and pilgrims alike. Many pilgrims come to visit the mausoleum, which serves as a shrine to Ismamut Ata, believed to be a contemporary and follower of the Prophet Muhammad and a founding father of Islam in Turkmenistan. Muslim holy men like Ismamut Ata are credited with playing a fundamental role not only in spreading Islam in the region, but also in strengthening a burgeoning communal identity.

One of the most notable features of this outstanding example of Central Asian medieval architecture is its silhouette. On the left side of the complex, seven white domes adorn the top of a long, narrow building leading to the mausoleum where the tomb commemorating Ismamut Ata is housed. Pilgrims exiting the mausoleum often walk backward through this long corridor known as the *dashkeche*, or "stone street," to always keep the sacred site in their line of vision. Elsewhere in the

Opposite: Local workers restore the domed corridor leading to Ismamut Ata's shrine complex, which dates to the 16th or 17th century. Left: More than 50,000 mud bricks were made on site to restore Ismamut Ata.

complex, rooms with domed ceilings, blackened fireplaces and ornate carved wooden doors open off an eye-catching courtyard. On the far side of the complex, a summer mosque with elaborately carved wooden pillars gives way to a winter mosque, atop which the call to prayer once sounded.

Unfortunately, the entire complex has suffered damage from northern Turkmenistan's harsh climate, which is characterized by severe winters, including rain and snow. The mausoleum's mud-brick walls have eroded, and exquisite wood carvings in the *madrasa* have been severely damaged. In fact, the monument is one of very few medieval monuments that have survived Turkmenistan's climate and are still accessible to the public.

Despite its historical and cultural significance, and continued attraction for pilgrims, the site has received very little international or domestic attention. To restore the structural integrity of the Ismamut Ata complex and promote awareness of its cultural importance, the U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat has committed $140,000 since 2008 through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation.

The AFCP funds have helped the Turkmenistan Institute of History and local partners to research and restore the domed corridor leading to the mausoleum, the *ashkana* (kitchen), and the winter and summer mosques. The restoration of the exterior and interior walls of the corridor required the on-site manufacture of more than 50,000 mud bricks using local materials and traditional methods. While repairing the monument's masonry is the most urgent challenge, the roofs, roof beams, columns, doors and other woodwork are also sorely in need of attention.

The U.S. Embassy hopes the restoration of Ismamut Ata and concurrent public outreach about its historical and cultural significance will draw more visitors, both local and international, to this significant site, and help the government and people of Turkmenistan to strengthen their national identity through the reclamation of this icon of their historical and cultural heritage.

"Ismamut Ata is a critically important part of Turkmenistan's and Central Asia's cultural heritage," said Robert E. Patterson Jr., U.S. ambassador to Turkmenistan. "Attracting tens of thousands of pilgrims each year from Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the site has served as a beacon for the faithful for nearly 10 centuries."

The AFCP has funded several similar projects in Turkmenistan, including the recent restoration of Mashat-Ata, Turkmenistan's oldest mosque dating back to the ninth century. The United States recognizes the essential role these sites have played in making Turkmenistan the rich culture that it is today. "The great Turkmen centers of learning in Mary, Ismamut Ata, and here in Mashat-Ata inspired generations of thinkers that formed the basis of Turkmen literature and history," said a senior U.S. official during Mashat-Ata's reopening ceremony on September 11, 2010. "Such great poets and thinkers as Dovletmamet Azadi, Makhtumkuli and Mollanepes used the teachings of Islam to become voices for a unified nation."

Top: Exterior of Ismamut Ata's domed corridor before restoration. Bottom: An imam sits just outside the newly repainted entrance to the domed corridor. Opposite, from left: The *dashkeche* prior to restoration; The *dashkeche* or "stone street," leading to the mausoleum where the tomb commemorating Ismamut Ata is housed.

"Countless pilgrims have journeyed across the desert to the Ismamut Ata complex since the earliest days of the Islamic faith. This stunning architectural monument is unique in Central Asia. We are proud to have had a hand in its preservation so that it can remain a crossroads of culture and civilization for centuries to come."

– U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan
Robert E. Patterson Jr.

THE AMERICAS

BOLIVIA

MEXICO

PERU

BOLIVIA

Communities Unite to Preserve Chapels

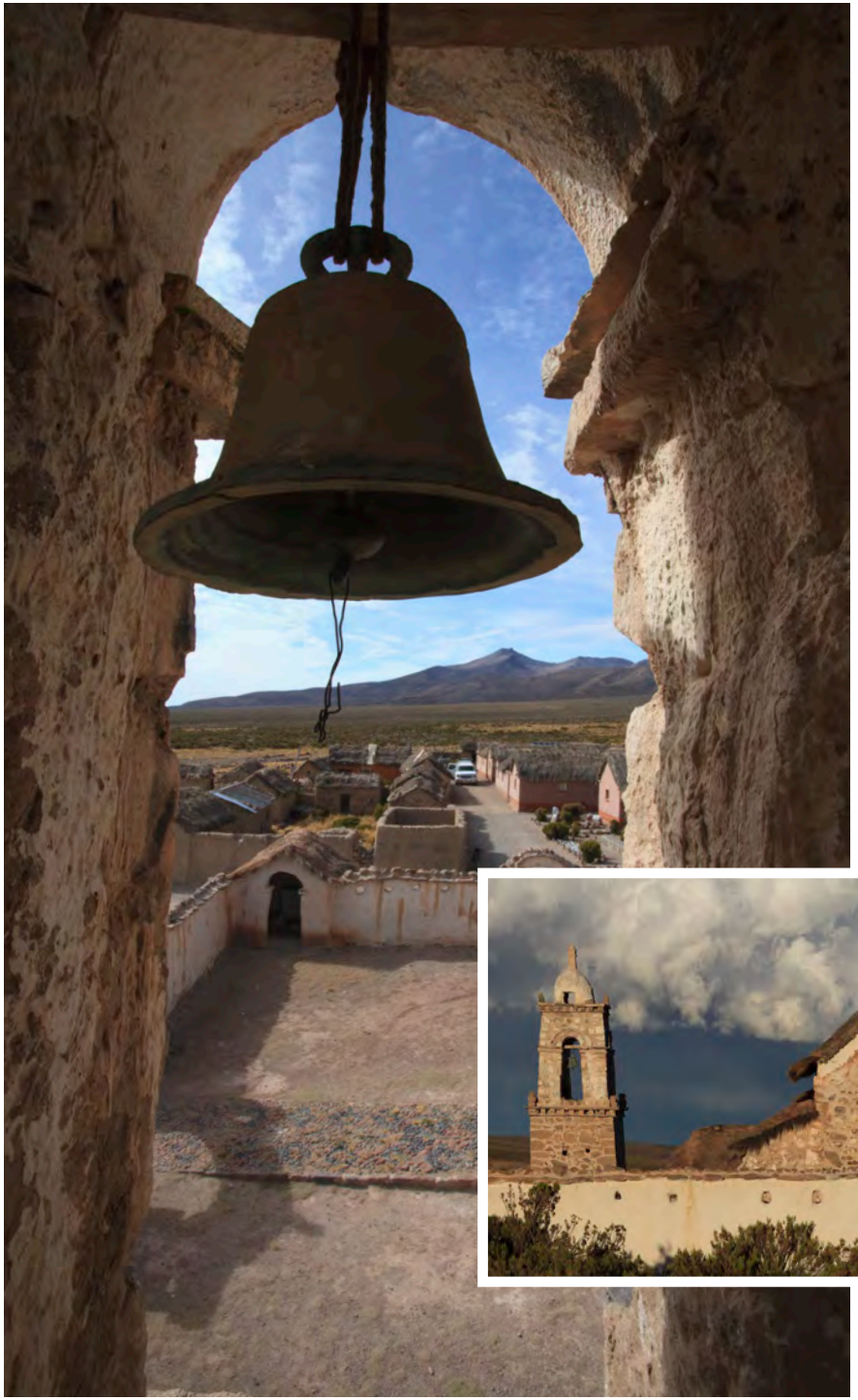
Four thousand meters above sea level in the Bolivian village of Curahuara de Carangas—the seat of the Sajama province of Oruro—dozens of small chapels dot the landscape of the *altiplano*. Since the pre-Columbian era, this village has sat on an important trade route for goods such as silver, mercury and llamas that runs from La Paz, Bolivia, to the nearest seaport in Arica, Chile. For the residents of Curahuara de Carangas, the chapels have served as important spiritual and community centers for more than 300 years.

Built in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Curahuara de Carangas chapels represent an architecturally significant marriage of the indigenous Aymara culture with Spanish Colonial style. The chapels were constructed by indigenous craftsmen under the direction of Spanish architects and church officials during the Spanish colonial era. They were built to be houses of worship as well as landmarks for Oruro's villagers, who have traditionally been shepherds. Although the chapels are Roman Catholic, representations of the cosmology and history of the indigenous Aymara people, who have lived in the Andes for more than 2,000 years, adorn their interiors. The art of one church, simply known as the Curahuara de Carangas Church, is so stunning and vibrant that it has earned the nickname "the Sistine Chapel of the *Altiplano*."

Local residents have maintained the chapels since the end of colonial rule in 1842, with little to no outside assistance. In years when there were no priests available to serve the chapels, community life continued to center on them, with locals gathering for funerals, weddings, traditional cultural celebrations and town meetings.

Unfortunately, centuries of cold and damp have caused severe deterioration in many of the chapels, with some so badly damaged that they are near collapse. Damage to their straw roofs

Opposite: Restored Huchusuma Chapel at Sajama National Park in Oruro, Bolivia. Left: The Curahuara de Carangas Church, built in 1608, has earned the nickname "the Sistine Chapel of the *Altiplano*" for its vibrant artwork.



has resulted in high levels of humidity in their interiors, which further threatens the plaster and paint on chapel walls.

In 2010 and 2012, the U.S. Embassy in La Paz granted $82,800 to the Santiago de Curahuara de Carangas Parish through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to restore the Curahuara de Carangas chapels to their original splendor. To date, the grants have supported collaborative, community-led restoration of 11 chapels in indigenous villages of Bolivia's *altiplano*, including its "Sistine Chapel."

Under the leadership of Father Gabriel Antequera, the Parish of Curahuara de Carangas did an exemplary job of managing funds and promoting community participation. Antequera lobbied for state and national support and secured the cooperation of local authorities on the project. When he met with embassy officers for the first time several years ago, he identified the restoration of the chapels as one of the most urgent needs in Curahuara. Seeing them restored today, he says, "is a dream come true."

Antequera believes this project has brought together the isolated communities and families spread throughout the *altiplano*. Families used to travel to larger villages for weekend services; now they worship in their own villages. "The villagers found in this project the renovation of their faith, and they realized the important historic and cultural value of their chapels as well," Antequera said. "Now they have pride in their communities and their churches."

Fabiola Ibarnegaray, Embassy La Paz senior cultural affairs specialist, who worked tirelessly with the community throughout the chapels' restoration, was impressed with the commitment and participation of everyone involved. "Working with Father Gabriel, the architects and the communities has been inspiring," Ibarnegaray said.

The project has helped Embassy La Paz establish a relationship with the residents of Curahuara: a community leader traveled to the United States through the International Visitor Leadership Program, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) donated computers and furniture to a community library, and the embassy's former Chargé d'Affaires John S. Creamer celebrated Christmas with local children. Current Chargé d'Affaires Larry Memmott has visited the Curahuara villages several times to participate in traditional ceremonies marking progress in the restorations, including one asking Pachamama (Mother Earth) for permission to undertake the project.

Left: The Tomarapi Chapel (inset) and bell tower after restoration at Sajama National Park in Oruro, Bolivia. Opposite: People from the village of Kellcata in front of their unrestored chapel in Oruro.

After restoration of the second group of churches, Embassy La Paz's USAID office provided economic development funding to the community to create a system of road signs that direct tourists to the chapels and also explain their importance. The signs were inaugurated in March 2013 during the embassy-sponsored visit of a Native American expert on economically and environmentally sustainable tourism for indigenous communities.

One unanticipated benefit of the AFCP grant resulted from the strong relationship the embassy developed with Bolivian architects involved in the restoration. Bolivia's National College of Architects invited Embassy La Paz to present an exhibition featuring the work of Pritzker Architecture Prize–winning American architects to more than 1,000 of their members. The exhibit is also scheduled to tour universities throughout Bolivia.

Top left: The restored Lagunas Chapel, built in the 18th century. Bottom left: Altarpiece in the restored Tomarapi Chapel at Sajama National Park in Oruro, Bolivia. Bottom right: Members of the local community played important roles in restoring the Kellcata Chapel. Opposite: A view of the mountains through an arch of the restored Ojsani Chapel.

"The chapel restorations have allowed us to show our great respect for Bolivians and their cultural patrimony and to build bridges to audiences we might not otherwise have reached. They benefit the people of a dozen small communities, providing them not only with places of worship but much-needed spaces where the community can gather for other purposes. Further support from the U.S. will help the communities share these historic gems with tourists, developing another source of economic growth in a region where poverty is endemic."

– U.S. Chargé d'Affaires
Larry Memmott


MEXICO

Aqueduct Spans Cultures, Generations

Soaring above the semiarid plains of Hidalgo in central Mexico, the 16th-century Father Tembleque Aqueduct is as stunning visually as it is architecturally. It took 16 years and 400 local laborers, led by Franciscan Friar Francisco de Tembleque, to complete the aqueduct, which is widely considered the 16th century's most important work of hydraulic engineering in the Americas. The sprawling structure once carried water a distance of 25.75 kilometers from the extinct Tecajete volcano to the previously uninhabitable, semidesert lands of Otumba. The spring water from the aqueduct allowed the region to develop agriculture and become a permanent settlement.

Among the aqueduct's most striking features are three volcanic stone arcades: Hacienda de Tecajete, Hacienda de Arcos, and Tepeyahualco. The southernmost arcade, Tepeyahualco, is considered the main arcade with 67 arches spanning 987 meters and reaching a height of 42 meters. According to legend, the main arch is large enough to allow a warship in full sail or even Mexico City's Cathedral to pass underneath untouched.

Although the aqueduct has deep roots in Roman imperial architecture, it is highly symbolic of the indigenous population that contributed to its construction and flourished from its development. Not only was the aqueduct built using indigenous, pre-Hispanic techniques and materials, it also bears glyphs representing the many communities that contributed to its construction.

Unfortunately, this hydrological masterpiece and cultural cornerstone has fallen into disrepair in recent decades due to weathering, erosion, wind damage, vandalism and encroaching

Opposite: The Tepeyahualco Arcade is an important part of the 16th-century Father Tembleque Aqueduct. Left: Workers extract liquid from the prickly pear cactus for use in the plaster coatings at the aqueduct project site.

construction. Tepeyahualco's structural integrity is challenged by invasive vegetation that has compromised its mortar and accelerated the disaggregation of its masonry.

With the aim of eventually restoring the structure to its original, fully functional state, the U.S. Embassy in Mexico has granted $780,000 since 2011 through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to restore the Father Tembleque Aqueduct. In partnership with Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology and History and the National Council for Culture and the Arts, the project is laying the groundwork for the aqueduct's long-term conservation, maintenance and management. The project hopes to protect the surrounding natural landscape, which has largely escaped the urban encroachment of nearby Mexico City.

The restoration of the 16th-century aqueduct is only one of several recent cultural preservation projects in Mexico funded by the U.S. Embassy through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund. Over the past 10 years, the embassy has also funded the enhancement of the Archaeological Resources Research and Management Development Center in Monte Albán, Oaxaca, to bolster Mexico's preservation capacity; the restoration of the Church of the Virgin of Candelaria's altarpiece in Yucatán; and the restoration of the 19th-century Garita de Metales building in Ciudad Juárez.

Top left: The Tembleque Aqueduct carries fresh water from the slopes of the extinct Tecajete volcano to cisterns in the semiarid region in the central highlands of Mexico. Bottom left: Glyphs representing the communities that contributed to the aqueduct's construction decorate its arches. Below: The Hacienda de Arcos Arcade is one of three monumental arcades along the Tembleque Aqueduct. Opposite: Railroad tracks run beneath the Tepeyahualco Arcade.

"Rescuing and restoring the Father Tembleque Aqueduct to its original function in effect makes it a living environmental monument. U.S. government participation in the project makes a powerful statement about our commitment to environmental preservation, sustainability and resource conservation. We hope it conveys our respect for the multicultural heritage that we share with all of the Americas."

– U.S. Ambassador to Mexico
E. Anthony Wayne


PERU

Cradle of Civilization in the Americas

Four thousand years before the Incas built Machu Picchu, the people of the sacred city of Caral were already busy building their own great civilization. Situated 182 kilometers north of the hustle and bustle of capital-city Lima, the ancient site of Caral transports visitors back 5,000 years—to what is now understood to be the cradle of civilization in the Americas.

Established around 2600 B.C.E. but forgotten until the 21st century, Caral made history in 2001 when archaeologists carbon-dated material from the city to 2627 B.C.E.—1,500 years earlier than expected. This shocking discovery revealed that the ancient people of Caral were, in fact, contemporaries of those who lived in ancient Egypt, China and Mesopotamia.

Not only is Caral one of the earliest settlements in the Americas, it is also one of the most highly developed and complex. Within the 626-hectare archaeological site, evidence of a fully developed sociopolitical state can be seen in the remaining pyramid temples, sunken plazas, housing complexes and amphitheater. It was named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2009.

"Caral combined size with construction volume," Peruvian archaeologist Ruth Shady said, "but it was also a planned city."

Research has determined that Caral's residents belonged to a highly organized social system that produced the most developed social and cultural traditions of its time. Farmers harvested crops such as pumpkin, corn, sweet potatoes, squash, chili peppers and cotton using irrigation canals from the Supe River. Musicians played flutes from pelican and condor bones and horns made from llama and alpaca bones—often decorated with ornate engravings of birds and monkeys from the Amazon. Evidence of extensive trade has also been discovered, with shrimp and mollusks from Peru's coast found within the city limits.

Opposite: Green mountains tower over the ancient city of Caral's third-millennium-B.C.E. pyramids. Left: Aerial view of the Great Pyramid at Caral.

Although Caral is exceptionally well-preserved for its age, 5,000 years of exposure to the elements have eroded its integrity. The constant wind blowing down from the Andean foothills has taken its toll on the site.

Thanks to an $800,000 award from the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation in 2009, Caral's future is looking much brighter. With funds from AFCP, the Proyecto Especial Arqueológico Caral-Supe (Special Archaeological Project for Caral-Supe, or PEACS) developed a plan for permanent preventive conservation of Caral. PEACS is concentrating both on restoring Caral and training a team of local conservators to maintain the site in the future. Since specialists in archaeological stone and mud-monument conservation are scarce in Peru, PEACS organized field workshops to train local staff in the necessary techniques. The U.S. Embassy hopes that by training local workers in conservation techniques, it is supporting not only the future of Caral, but of other archaeological sites in the area.

Top across: 360-degree panoramic view of the ancient city of Caral, dating to 2600 B.C.E. Top left: Workers make mud bricks in the traditional way to restore ruins in the more than 5,000-year-old city of Caral in Peru. Bottom left: Local people learn conservation techniques to restore Caral and similar sites. Opposite: Caral at dusk.

"Emerging nearly untouched from the sandy dunes of the Supe Valley, the sacred city of Caral is a testament to the ingenuity and high level of development reached by this ancient people. The 5,000-year-old stones tell the fascinating story of a complex society that inhabited one of the world's cradles of civilization. With the largest grant to date in the Western Hemisphere, the Ambassadors Fund enabled both conservation of the monuments and painstaking academic study, which have elevated the profile of this site and indelibly altered our understanding of history in the Americas."

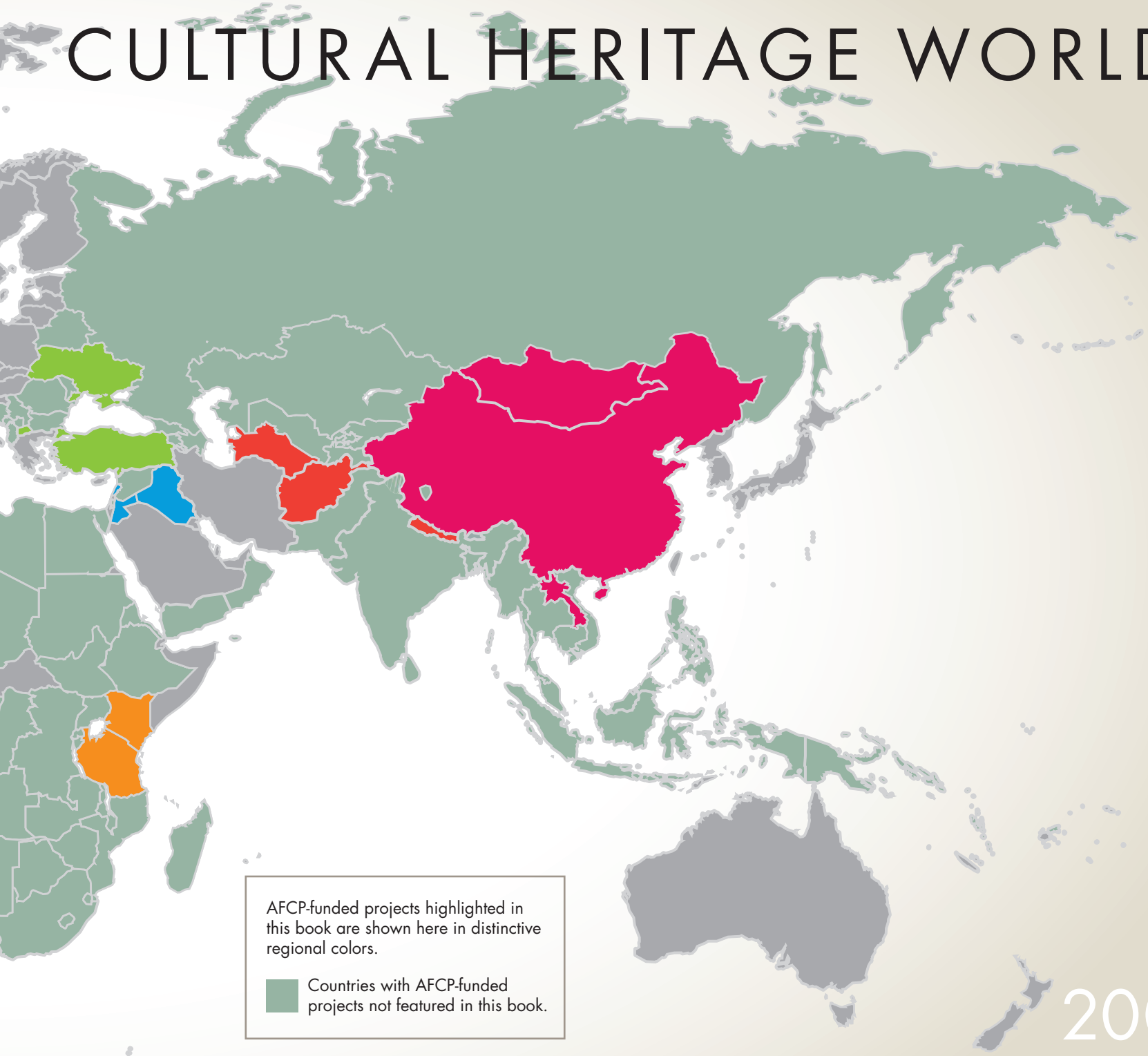
– U.S. Ambassador to Peru
Rose M. Likins

RESPECTING AND PRESERVING

With the creation of the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) in 2001, the United States pledged its support for the preservation of cultural heritage in developing countries and demonstrated U.S. respect for other cultures.

Since then, AFCP has supported projects to preserve cultural heritage in more than 125 countries around the world. This map highlights the countries that have received funding through AFCP since 2001.

CULTURAL HERITAGE WORLDWIDE



AFCP-funded projects highlighted in this book are shown here in distinctive regional colors.

Countries with AFCP-funded projects not featured in this book.

2001–2013

Embassy of the United States of America

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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